

# Psychological Sequelae of Hate Crime Victimization Among Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Adults

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## **Abstract**

*To assess the psychological correlates of hate crime victimization based on sexual orientation, and to compare the sequelae of bias crimes with those of other crimes, questionnaire data about victimization experiences were collected from 2259 lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals (total N = 1170 females, 1089 males) in the Sacramento (CA) area. Approximately one-fifth of females and one-fourth of males had experienced a bias-related criminal victimization since age 16; one-eighth of females and one-sixth of males had experienced a bias crime recently (in the previous 5 years). Hate crimes were less likely*

*than nonbias crimes to have been reported to police authorities. Compared to lesbian and gay victims of recent nonbias crimes, recent hate crime victims displayed significantly more symptoms of depression, anger, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress. Significant differences were not observed among bisexuals. Gay and lesbian hate crime survivors manifested significantly more fear of crime, greater perceived vulnerability, less belief in the benevolence of people, lower sense of mastery, and more attributions of their personal setbacks to sexual prejudice than did nonbias crime victims and nonvictims. The findings highlight the importance of recognizing hate crime survivors' special needs in clinical settings and in public policy.*

Hate crimes are criminal actions intended to harm or intimidate people because of their race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, religion, or other minority group status (e.g., Herek, 1989; Levin & McDevitt, 1993). During the 1990s, the problem of hate crimes – also referred to as bias crimes – attracted increasing attention from community activists, policy makers, and social scientists (Herek & Berrill, 1992; Jenness & Broad, 1997; Levin & McDevitt, 1993). Much of this heightened concern has reflected an assumption that whereas all crimes have negative consequences for the victim, hate

crimes represent a special case because of their more serious impact on both the crime victim and the larger group to which she or he belongs.

The psychological processes underlying such differential impact have perhaps been most thoroughly discussed in reference to hate crimes based on sexual orientation. Garnets, Herek, and Levy (1990) observed that a positive sense of self as a gay man, lesbian, or bisexual person is integral to coping effectively with the stresses created by societal prejudice. If experiencing a hate crime causes a victim's core identity to become directly linked to the heightened sense of vulnerability that normally follows victimization (Norris & Kaniasty, 1991), being homosexual or bisexual may subsequently be experienced as a source of danger, pain, and punishment rather than intimacy, love, and community (Garnets et al., 1990). Consequently, the impact of a hate crime would extend beyond the trauma routinely associated with criminal victimization, challenging the victim's sense of a self as a gay man, lesbian, or bisexual.

Indeed, lesbian, gay, and bisexual people might be particularly vulnerable to the negative psychological effects of hate crimes for several reasons. Sexual prejudice is still acceptable in many quarters of American society, and antigay discrimination remains legal in many jurisdictions (e.g., Herek, 1992). As a result, gay, lesbian, and bisexual crime victims may receive the message that they deserved their attack. Victims who harbor residual negative feelings about their sexual orientation may accept this notion, which could heighten their subsequent psychological distress (Garnets et al., 1990). Moreover, because one's identity as gay, lesbian, or bisexual usually develops outside of – often in opposition to – one's family and community of origin, members of this population do not automatically enjoy family and community support when they are victimized, nor are they likely to be taught strategies for coping with prejudice from an early age.

Although it is theoretically compelling, the hypothesis that hate crimes have more negative psychological sequelae than other kinds of crime has not been empirically tested. Barnes and

Ephross (1994) documented self-reported emotional reactions and behavioral changes among survivors of racial, ethnic, and religious bias crimes. However, they did not systematically assess psychological or behavioral responses, nor did they obtain comparison data from victims of nonbias crimes. Hershberger and D'Augelli (1995) observed moderate correlations between general psychological distress and bias-related victimization among lesbian and gay youths, but they did not report comparative data on nonbias victimizations. Otis and Skinner (1996) found an association between assault experiences and symptoms of depression in lesbian and gay adults, but their analysis combined hate crime and nonbias victimizations.

The primary goal of the present study, therefore, was to compare levels of psychological distress among lesbian, gay, and bisexual victims of hate crimes, victims of other kinds of crime, and nonvictims. Our review of past studies on the psychological aftermath of crime suggested five indicators of psychological functioning that are likely to be strongly affected by criminal victimization. We hypothesized that, in comparison to nonvictims and victims of nonbias crimes, hate crime victims would report more symptoms of depression and traumatic stress; would be more anxious and angry; and would display less positive affect.

In addition, we explored how hate crimes might be associated with world views that could affect psychological well-being. We hypothesized that hate-crime victims, compared to others, would report diminished feelings of safety, less faith in the benevolence of the world and of people, and a lower sense of mastery (Janoff-Bulman, 1989; Norris & Kaniasty, 1991; Pearlin, Menaghan, Lieberman, & Mullan, 1981). In addition, whereas any serious crime can challenge victims' beliefs and perceptions about their social world, experiencing a hate crime might link such perceptions to an intensified salience of societal prejudice. We further hypothesized, therefore, that hate crime survivors would display a greater tendency than others to attribute their personal setbacks to society's antigay prejudice (Herek & Glunt,

1995).

## Method

### *Sample and Recruitment*

The sample consisted of 1170 women and 1089 men (total  $N = 2259$ ) living in and around Sacramento, California. Because sufficient resources were not available to permit probability sampling, we employed a variety of strategies to recruit as diverse a sample as possible from five sources: (a) major community events, including the annual Pride celebrations in June (46% of the sample); (b) cafes, clubs, and bars frequented by gay men, lesbians, and bisexuals (18%); (c) community organizations (12%); (d) notices, advertisements, and leaflets distributed throughout the community (16%); and (e) personal networks of study participants (8%), including participants in a pilot study (Herek, Gillis, Cogan, & Glunt, 1997).

### *Measures*

Participants completed an extensive self-administered questionnaire battery, which required approximately 40 minutes. Separate male and female versions were printed with gender-appropriate language. Three sections of the questionnaire are relevant to the present paper.

*Victimization experiences.* Participants were asked “Have you ever been the victim of a crime or attempted crime – such as a physical attack, sexual assault, robbery, or vandalism – because someone thought you were lesbian [gay] or bisexual?” Those responding affirmatively were asked four follow-up questions about their most recent victimization: (a) when it occurred (response options were provided for each year from the current year back to 1990, with additional check boxes for the periods 1981-89, 1970-80, and before 1970); (b) the nature of the incident (e.g., “you were hit, beaten, or physically attacked”), with response options including physical assault, sexual assault, robbery, burglary and theft, vandalism, attempted nonsexual assault, attempted sexual assault, attempted property crime, and witnessing the murder of a loved one; (c) whether the perpetrator used a gun, knife, or other weapon; and (d) whether the respondent

reported the incident to law enforcement officials.<sup>1</sup> If applicable, participants were asked a second, identical series of questions about their next most recent victimization, and then additional questions (concerning crime type and use of weapon) about all other victimizations. Questions about crimes not based on the victim’s sexual orientation followed on a separate page of the questionnaire. Participants were asked “Other than the crimes you described on the last page, have you ever been the victim of any sort of crime or attempted crime – such as a physical attack, assault, robbery, or vandalism? (These are crimes *not* related to someone thinking you were lesbian [gay] or bisexual.)” The same follow-up questions were then posed about nonbias crimes as had been asked about hate crime experiences.<sup>2</sup>

*Psychological well-being.* Five aspects of psychological well-being during the previous 30 days were measured. *Depressive symptoms* were assessed with the 20-item Center for Epidemiologic Studies Depression scale (CES-D; Radloff, 1977;  $\alpha = .91$  in the current sample). Symptoms of *crime-related traumatic stress* were assessed with 20 items based on DSM-III diagnostic criteria for post-traumatic stress (Kilpatrick et al., 1989), adapted for self-administration ( $\alpha = .89$ ). A sample item is “I had trouble concentrating, even when I tried to concentrate.” *State anxiety* and *state anger* were measured with items from the short versions of Spielberger’s scales (for the 6-item anxiety scale [Marteau & Bekker, 1992],  $\alpha = .92$ ; for the 10-item anger scale [Spielberger, Jacobs, Russel, & Crane, 1983],  $\alpha = .92$ ). *Positive affect* was measured with 5 items adapted from the Affect Balance Scale (Bradburn, 1969;  $\alpha = .79$ ). The response alternatives for all items were *never*, *almost never*, *sometimes*, *fairly often*, *very often*.

*World view and victimization-related beliefs.* We assessed six types of beliefs that might be affected by victimization. Beliefs about the *benevolence of the impersonal world* and *benevolence of people* were assessed with items from Janoff-Bulman’s (1989) measures (for the 4-item Benevolence of World scale,  $\alpha = .85$ ; for the 4-item Benevolence of People scale,  $\alpha = .71$ ). Beliefs about *personal safety* were assessed

with a 6-item version of Norris and Kaniasty's (1991) Fear of Crime measure ( $\alpha = .82$ ), adapted for local administration (Herek et al., 1997). Personal *sense of control* was measured by the 6-item Self Mastery Scale (Pearlin et al, 1981;  $\alpha = .76$ ). *Attributions to sexual prejudice* were measured with a 4-item scale that assesses respondents' tendency to attribute negative life events and setbacks to societal prejudice against homosexuality and gay people (e.g., "Most of the bad things in my life happen because of homophobia"; Herek and Glunt, 1995;  $\alpha = .85$ ). All of these measures were administered with a 5-point response scale ranging from *disagree strongly* to *agree strongly*. Two additional items assessed participants' *perceived vulnerability* to future crime victimization, using a 10-point response scale with higher scores indicating greater perceived vulnerability ("How likely do you think it is that you will be the victim of an anti-lesbian/anti-bisexual [for men: anti-gay/anti-bisexual] crime during the next 12 months?" and "Compared to other lesbian/bisexual women [gay/bisexual men] in the Sacramento area, what would you say are your own chances of ever being the victim of a crime?"  $\alpha = .81$ ).

### **Procedure**

Questionnaire packets were distributed throughout the greater Sacramento lesbian, gay, and bisexual community between June 1994 and October 1995. Questionnaires were either completed and returned immediately (by participants recruited at community events or meetings of community organizations) or returned by mail in a postage-paid envelope. All participants were given a toll-free number for contacting the research team if they had questions about the questionnaire or the research project. Overall, 2344 questionnaires were returned. Of these, 85 were discarded for various reasons (e.g., sexual orientation not reported, excessive missing data, respondent completed multiple questionnaires), leaving 2259 questionnaires for analysis.<sup>3</sup>

## **Results**

### **Sample Characteristics**

Most participants (83%) described their sexual orientation as "gay or homosexual" (980 women, 898 men). Of the 381 participants who described themselves as bisexual, 58% reported that they were primarily attracted to members of their same gender, 18% primarily to the other gender, and 24% equally to men and women. The sample was predominantly White (79%), with another 7% Latino, 4% African American, 3% Asian/Pacific Islander, 1% Native American, and 6% "other" (most of them reporting mixed ancestry). Participants ranged in age from 18 to 82 years (*Median* = 34), with bisexual men and women significantly younger than gay men, and all three groups younger than lesbians ( $F [3, 2223] = 18.59, p < .001$ ). The sample was highly educated, with 43% having earned at least a bachelor's degree. Median personal income for the previous year was \$15,000 - 25,000, except for bisexual women, whose median income was \$5,000 - 15,000.

### **Patterns of Victimization**

Approximately one-fourth of the men and one-fifth of the women had experienced criminal victimization as an adult at least once because of their sexual orientation (Table 1). Approximately two-fifths of the men and more than half of the women had experienced a crime that was unrelated to their sexual orientation. Men were more likely than women, and homosexuals were more likely than bisexuals, to experience a hate crime. Women were more likely than men to experience nonbias crimes, especially assaults.

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*Insert Table 1 about here*

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Regardless of the victim's gender or sexual orientation, hate crimes were less likely than nonbias crimes to be reported to police authorities. Lesbians reported 36% of their hate crime victimizations to police, but 68.4% of other victimizations; gay men reported 45.6% of hate crime victimizations, but 72.2% of their other victimizations; bisexual women reported

34.8% of hate crime victimizations, but 62.1% of other victimizations; and bisexual men reported 23.9% of hate crime victimizations, compared to 61.4% of nonbias crimes.

Stepwise logistic regression analyses revealed that bias crime victimization during the previous 5 years<sup>4</sup> was predicted by being unemployed, reporting lower annual income, having a lower educational level, being male, and being out of the closet to a larger circle of friends and relatives,  $C^2 [5, N = 2101] = 76.16$  ( $p < .001$ ). In contrast, nonbias crime victimization in the same period was predicted by being bisexual, reporting lower income, and being younger ( $C^2 [3, N = 2101] = 54.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Neither victimization type was predicted by race or ethnicity, number of years since coming out, physical size (height, weight), or currently having a lover.

Questionnaire responses revealed that criminal victimization occurred against a backdrop of widespread harassment based on sexual orientation. Verbal harassment in the previous year was reported by more than half of the participants (56.1%). In addition, 19% of the sample were threatened with violence in the previous year, 17% were chased or followed, 12% had an object thrown at them, and 5% were spat upon because of their sexual orientation. Chi-square analyses revealed consistent differences by gender but not sexual orientation. Men were significantly more likely than women to report all five types of intimidation (verbal harassment:  $C^2 [1, N = 2207] = 19.44$ ,  $p < .001$ ; threats:  $C^2 [1, N = 2204] = 56.53$ ,  $p < .001$ ; being chased or followed:  $C^2 [1, N = 2198] = 27.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ; having objects thrown at them:  $C^2 [1, N = 2201] = 22.59$ ,  $p < .001$ ; and being spat upon:  $C^2 [1, N = 2204] = 4.33$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

### ***Psychological Correlates of Victimization***

*Psychological distress.* Based on past research (Bard & Sangrey, 1979; Janoff-Bulman & Frieze, 1983; Kilpatrick et al., 1985), we began with three assumptions: (a) Crimes against the person (assaults, rapes, robberies) are usually more traumatic than property crimes; (b) experiencing a completed crime is usually more traumatic than experiencing an attempted crime;

and (c) recent victimizations are usually associated with more current distress than past victimizations (i.e., the psychological impact of victimization diminishes over time). Because even this modest list of assumptions could have generated more comparison groups than our sample would allow, we made several decisions based on our exploratory data analyses. First, because we observed that property crimes were not associated with elevated psychological distress, we combined individuals who solely reported property crimes with nonvictims. Second, because few participants reported having experienced an attempted crime but no completed crimes, we excluded these individuals from our analyses. Third, we distinguished between recent crimes (those occurring in the previous 5 years) and earlier crimes.

We classified participants who reported two or more victimizations according to their most recent event, with a separate category reserved for those who experienced both bias and nonbias person crimes in the previous 5 years. The handful of participants who experienced multiple bias person crimes in the previous 5 years (but no nonbias crimes) or multiple nonbias person crimes in the same time period (but no bias crimes) were combined with those who experienced only one victimization event in the previous 5 years.<sup>5</sup> Events that included multiple types of victimization (e.g., assault with vandalism) were categorized according to the most serious type of victimization that occurred, with a completed person crime considered the most serious, followed by an attempted person crime, then a completed property crime.

We categorized participants hierarchically into 5 groups: (a) those reporting *both* bias-related person crimes *and* nonbias person crimes in the previous 5 years ( $n = 16$ , or 1% of the total sample); (b) those reporting at least one bias-related person crime in the previous 5 years, but no nonbias person crimes in that period ( $n = 85$ , or 4%); (c) those reporting at least one nonbias person crime in the previous 5 years, but no bias-related person crimes in that period ( $n = 143$ , or 6%); (d) those reporting no person crimes in the previous five years, but at least one person crime (bias or nonbias) more

than five years earlier ( $n = 212$ , or 9%); and (e) those reporting no crimes or only attempted victimizations ( $n = 1307$ , or 58%). This analysis excluded participants who reported an attempted person crime (bias or nonbias) but no completed person crimes in the past 5 years ( $n = 71$ , or 3%), and those who could not otherwise be classified (e.g., because they failed to report the date or details of their victimization;  $n = 165$ , or 7%). In addition, exploratory analyses revealed that the 260 respondents (12% of the sample) who reported having been criminally victimized before age 16 displayed higher levels of psychological distress than participants who reported no victimization ever or adult victimization more than 5 years earlier, a finding consistent with research showing that preadult victimization can be associated with heightened adult psychological distress (Rind, Tromovitch, & Bauserman, 1998).<sup>6</sup> To avoid conflating the psychological sequelae of recent crimes with those of preadult crimes, we excluded these participants from the analysis.

Considering lesbians and gay men first, Table 2 shows a consistent pattern in psychological distress scores: Individuals who experienced a bias crime in the previous five years scored higher than other participants on four of the five measures. MANOVA yielded a significant multivariate effect (Wilks Lambda [ $\Lambda$ ] = .935,  $F(20, 4252) = 4.37$ ,  $p < .001$ , Effect Size [ES] = .017). Univariate effects were significant ( $p < .001$ ) for depressive symptoms ( $F(4, 1385) = 9.62$ , ES = .027), traumatic stress symptoms ( $F(4, 1431) = 17.81$ , ES = .047), anxiety ( $F(4, 1431) = 9.06$ , ES = .025), and anger ( $F(4, 1408) = 12.17$ , ES = .033).<sup>7</sup> Planned comparisons revealed that, with one exception, victims of recent bias crimes consistently scored significantly higher (more distress) than victims of recent nonbias crimes, victims of earlier crimes (+ 5 years), and nonvictims on those four measures (all  $ps < .01$ ). The one exception was anxiety, on which recent bias crime victims did not differ significantly from victims of crimes more than 5 years earlier. Group differences for positive affect were not statistically significant.

For bisexuals, MANOVA revealed no significant differences in psychological distress

among victimization groups. Distress appeared to be slightly higher among bisexuals who reported one or more nonbias crimes during the previous five years. Because of the relatively small number of bisexuals in the sample, however, we interpret this analysis with caution.

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*Insert Tables 2 and 3 about here*

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*Crime-related beliefs.* We compared world views across victimization categories (Table 3). For lesbians and gay men, MANOVA revealed significant differences among victimization groups ( $\Lambda = .904$ ,  $F(24, 3695) = 4.50$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = .025), and univariate ANOVAs indicated significant differences for all six variables: benevolence of the world ( $F(4, 1174) = 2.77$ ,  $p < .05$ , ES = .009), benevolence of people ( $F(4, 1182) = 4.45$ ,  $p < .01$ , ES = .015), fear of crime ( $F(4, 1183) = 11.10$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = .036), vulnerability ( $F(4, 1183) = 14.11$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = .046), self mastery ( $F(4, 1166) = 7.93$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = .026), and attributions to sexual prejudice ( $F(4, 1189) = 14.87$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = .048). Planned comparisons revealed that hate crime survivors displayed significantly less belief in the benevolence of people, more fear of crime, greater perceived vulnerability, lower self mastery, and more attributions to sexual prejudice than did nonbias crime victims, victims of earlier crime, and nonvictims (all  $ps < .05$ ). Hate crime survivors did not differ significantly from other groups in their beliefs in the benevolence of the world.

Among bisexuals, MANOVA revealed a significant multivariate effect ( $\Lambda = .745$ ,  $F(24, 660) = 2.43$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = .071), with significant univariate effects for fear of crime ( $F(4, 226) = 3.48$ ,  $p < .01$ , ES = .058) and perceived vulnerability ( $F(4, 224) = 10.14$ ,  $p < .001$ , ES = .153). Planned comparisons revealed that bisexual hate crime victims perceived themselves to be more vulnerable than nonvictims and victims of crimes more than 5 years earlier. However, they did not differ significantly from victims of recent nonbias crimes.

## Discussion

Recent hate crime victimization appears to be associated with greater psychological distress for gay men and lesbians than is victimization in a recent nonbias crime. Lesbians and gay men who experienced an assault or other person crime based on their sexual orientation within the previous 5 years reported significantly more symptoms of depression, post-traumatic stress, anxiety, and anger than did their counterparts who experienced nonbias person crimes in that period or no crimes at all. The finding that gay and lesbian survivors of antigay crimes were more likely than other respondents to regard the world as unsafe, to view people as malevolent, to exhibit a relatively low sense of personal mastery, and to attribute their personal setbacks to sexual prejudice is consistent with the hypothesis that experiencing a hate crime links the victim's post-crime feelings of vulnerability and powerlessness with her or his sexual orientation and personal identity (e.g., Garnets et al., 1990). This linkage may help to explain hate crime survivors' greater distress, compared to survivors of nonbias crimes.

It might also increase the length of time needed for recovery from a hate crime. In post hoc analyses of distress levels according to year of victimization, we observed that all respondents tended to manifest elevated psychological distress if their most recent victimization occurred within the previous two years. Among respondents who had been victimized 3-5 years earlier, hate crime victims had more symptoms of depression, anxiety, anger, and traumatic stress than nonbias crime victims, although the differences were not statistically significant. Differential rates of recovery from bias and nonbias crime warrant investigation in future research.

We did not observe significant differences between victim groups in positive affect. This finding may indicate that post-victimization differences manifest primarily in negative symptoms. Victims may continue to display positive affect while also experiencing depression, anxiety, anger, and stress. Alternatively, the measure of positive affect that we employed may not have been sufficiently

sensitive to detect important group differences.

Whereas bias and nonbias crimes were clearly associated with differences in psychological functioning among gay men and lesbians, we did not observe comparable differences among bisexual men and women. The lack of difference may have resulted simply from the relatively small number of bisexuals who reported crimes, which could have made statistical comparisons unreliable. Alternatively, bisexual men and women might manifest different community affiliations and constructions of personal identity, which could affect how they experience a bias-motivated crime. Further research with larger samples of bisexuals is needed to understand this pattern. More generally, the results highlight the importance of differentiating bisexuals from homosexuals in hate crime research.

Although attempts to generalize from the present sample must be cautious, the data suggest that a substantial number of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people experience criminal victimization or harassment because of their sexual orientation. Whereas crime risk generally was higher for individuals with lower socioeconomic status, the risk for hate crime victimization was higher for men and for individuals reporting more openness about their sexual orientation. At the same time, victimization was somewhat less prevalent in the present study than in previous research (Berrill, 1992; Herek et al., 1997), possibly because the sample was larger and more diverse than in earlier studies, and included many respondents with only minimal involvement with the local gay and lesbian community (e.g., those who do not frequent bars, clubs, or community events). Because of its lower visibility, the latter group appears to be at somewhat lower risk for hate crime victimization. In addition, our survey instrument may have yielded more accurate prevalence estimates than the checklist techniques employed in past studies because it provided multiple cues for accurate recall (e.g., questions about the date and types of victimization in each incident). Consistent with other studies (Berrill, 1992; Herek, 1989), bias crimes were less likely to be reported to police

than were nonbias crimes.

Because the data are cross-sectional, a causal relationship between victimization and distress has not been demonstrated. It is possible, for example, that high levels of psychological distress are associated with a general sense of persecution because of one's homosexuality which, in turn, makes distressed respondents more likely to interpret their victimization retrospectively as antigay. This hypothesis seems implausible, however, because elevated distress was associated with recent bias crimes against the person, but not with bias crimes occurring in the more distant past and not with recent bias-motivated property crimes. Furthermore, recent nonbias person crimes also were associated with heightened distress, albeit less than that associated with bias crimes. These patterns – coupled with the strong theoretical basis for expecting a causal link (Garnets et al., 1990) – suggest that hate crimes against one's person do indeed create higher levels of psychological distress than nonbias person crimes.

It is worth noting that we did not ask respondents to classify their experience as a hate crime or nonbias crime. Rather, we asked them whether they believed that they were victimized because someone thought they were gay, lesbian, or bisexual. In pilot study interviews (Herek et al., 1997), most respondents used the perpetrator's statements or contextual cues (e.g., they were holding hands with a same-sex partner) to decide that a crime was based on their sexual orientation. Follow-up interviews with some respondents from the present study revealed a similar pattern. Thus, although a few respondents may have reported incidents that would not meet legal criteria for a hate crime, most of the victimizations probably were indeed hate crimes.

The present findings suggest a variety of directions for future research. In addition to replicating our results with respondents from other geographic areas, it will be valuable to examine the relationship between bias-motivated victimization and psychological well-being in subgroups within the lesbian and gay community. Our findings suggest that

victimization among youths and bisexuals warrants further inquiry. Replication of the study with individuals from racial and ethnic minority communities will also be important because they often experience hate-crime victimization based on their ethnicity as well as their sexual orientation. In addition, empirical study of intervening variables that affect the relationship between bias victimization and psychological distress will be important.

The findings also have important implications for therapeutic interventions. Hate crime survivors have special concerns in addition to those of victims of other crimes (Garnets et al., 1990). In particular, lesbian and gay male hate crime survivors may perceive that their sexual orientation places them at heightened risk for all kinds of negative experiences in a dangerous world over which they have little control. Hate crime victimization may upset the balance between, on the one hand, the need to maintain an adaptive illusion of personal invulnerability and relative safety from persecution based on one's minority status with, on the other hand, the need to realistically appraise situations that might pose a danger to oneself. Survivors of bias victimization may tend to interpret all of the negative events in their lives as resulting from sexual prejudice. One important goal for interventions with victims, therefore, may be to assist them in regaining a balanced world view that allows them to recognize the objective dangers posed by society's prejudice while not being overwhelmed by a sense of personal vulnerability and powerlessness.

The present study also has important implications for public policy. In recent years, laws have been passed at the state and federal level that enhance penalties for hate crimes. Sexual orientation, however, is not included in several state hate crime statutes, and attempts to expand federal statutes to encompass crimes based on sexual orientation have failed to date (Drake, 1998; Lyman, 1998). The findings presented here indicate that laws and policies that differentiate hate crimes from nonbias crimes are justified in identifying hate crimes for special attention in the criminal justice system

because hate crimes appear to have a more serious impact on the victim than other crimes.

The present study focused on crimes based on the victim's sexual orientation. The extent to which our findings are applicable to crimes based on race, religion, and other minority characteristics remains an empirical question. Whereas members of different minorities share the experience of belonging to one (or more) of society's outgroups and being targets of aggression, each such group has a distinctive history and culture. Psychologists have an important role to play in advancing scientific knowledge, clinical understanding, and policy responses relevant to hate crimes of all types.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Due to a clerical error, questions about police reporting were omitted from 422 questionnaires.

<sup>2</sup> All respondents were administered the hate crimes questions first. Based on survey research on conversational norms and assimilation-contrast effects (e.g., Schwarz, Strack, & Mai, 1991), we expected respondents to more easily and accurately interpret the question about general (nonbias) victimization as excluding bias victimization if questions about specific (antigay) victimization were asked first. In addition, in our pilot research the frequency with which bias and nonbias crimes were reported was unrelated to presentation order (Herek et al., 1997).

<sup>3</sup> Because of the multiple recruitment and distribution strategies, as well as the self-selective nature of several aspects of the recruitment procedure (e.g., individuals who wished to complete the questionnaire approached the researchers at community events or called the toll-free number to request a questionnaire), an accurate response rate cannot be reliably determined.

<sup>4</sup> We examined crimes in this discrete time interval, rather than using lifetime victimization frequencies, to control for age effects (because older respondents had lived longer, they had more opportunities to be victimized). As would be expected, fewer respondents had experienced victimization within the previous five years than had ever experienced it since age 16: 13.4% of lesbians, 17.7% of gay men, 10.5% of bisexual women, and 15.7% of bisexual men.

<sup>5</sup> We had hoped to examine the effects of multiple

victimizations over time and multiple victimizations within a single incident. However, our analyses were constrained by the number of analytic categories generated by these variables, and the relatively small number of respondents with multiple victimizations.

<sup>6</sup> Our questionnaire did not ask the respondent's age at the time of victimization. Furthermore, because only a range of years (rather than the exact year of the incident) was ascertained for victimizations that occurred more than 5 years previously, we could not calculate the respondent's exact age at the time of long-past crimes. We conservatively estimated each respondent's youngest possible age at the time of any victimizations that occurred more than 5 years earlier. For example, if a respondent reported a crime that occurred between 1970 and 1979, we estimated her or his youngest possible age at the time of the crime by subtracting the respondent's birth year from 1970. This approach almost certainly classified some crimes that occurred in young adulthood as preadult crimes.

<sup>7</sup> To reduce the impact of missing data, we conducted individual univariate ANOVAs after using MANOVA to test for the significant multivariate effect. In all cases, the pattern of the results was the same between the individual ANOVAs and the univariate ANOVAs performed in conjunction with MANOVA. In planned comparisons, recent bias crime victims were compared with recent nonbias crime victims, victims of earlier crime (+5 years previously), and nonvictims. We also repeated the analyses using age, employment status, income, outness, gender, and income (i.e., the variables that were significant predictors of victimization) as covariates. The patterns of significance did not change with inclusion of the covariates.

**Table 1**  
*Prevalence of Bias and Nonbias Victimization in Adulthood*

	Lesbians ( <i>n</i> = 980)		Gay Men ( <i>n</i> = 898)		Bisexual Women ( <i>n</i> = 190)		Bisexual Men ( <i>n</i> = 191)	
	Bias	Nonbias	Bias	Nonbias	Bias	Nonbias	Bias	Nonbias
Sexual Assault	2.6	18.8	3.6	1.8	3.7	28.9	6.8	5.2
Other Physical Assault	6.6	12.4	12.5	8.4	5.3	18.9	11.0	14.1
Attempted Sexual Assault	1.7	6.8	2.6	1.3	2.1	13.7	5.2	3.1
Attempted Other Assault	5.7	4.4	10.4	4.1	4.2	8.4	11.5	9.4
Robbery	0.6	5.0	4.7	8.0	0	7.4	4.7	13.6
Property Crimes	9.4	39.9	11.5	32.3	5.3	42.1	9.9	22.5
Any Crime	19.1	56.3	28.3	42.9	14.7	65.3	26.7	39.3

Figures represent the percentage of each group reporting ever having experienced each type of crime.

**Table 2**

*Mean Scores for Psychological Distress By Victimization Groups (Lesbians and Gay Men)*

Group	CES-D	Traumatic Stress	Anxiety	Anger	Positive Affect
No Crimes ( <i>n</i> = 1114)	14.39 (9.30)	4.77 (4.41)	6.76 (3.38)	6.50 (5.45)	9.34 (2.97)
Any Crimes + 5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 187)	15.27 (10.14)	5.98 (5.02)	7.76 (3.59)	7.63 (5.42)	8.97 (3.00)
Nonbias Crimes < 5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 100)	17.02 (10.95)	6.48 (5.01)	7.34 (3.44)	7.65 (5.53)	9.10 (3.38)
Bias Crimes < 5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 69)	20.98 (10.42)	8.71 (5.55)	8.67 (4.22)	10.62 (7.75)	8.73 (3.18)
Both Bias & Nonbias Crimes < 5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 11)	22.64 (11.10)	10.13 (5.96)	9.55 (3.59)	12.40 (7.29)	9.27 (3.35)

*Note.* All five measures of psychological distress assessed respondents' experiences during the previous 30 days. Because of missing data, group sizes vary across measures. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.

**Table 3**

*Mean Scores on Measures of World Views By Victimization Groups (Lesbians and Gay Men)*

Group	Benevolence of World	Benevolence of People	Fear of Crime	Perceived Vulnerability	Mastery	Attributions To Sexual Prejudice
No Crimes ( <i>n</i> = 1114)	8.43 (2.38)	8.45 (1.95)	6.72 (3.54)	4.59 (3.78)	15.78 (3.29)	1.81 (2.14)
Any Crimes +5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 187)	8.07 (2.25)	8.24 (1.82)	7.76 (3.54)	5.11 (3.83)	15.02 (3.13)	2.21 (2.15)
Nonbias Crimes < 5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 100)	7.91 (2.27)	8.14 (2.06)	8.31 (3.58)	6.55 (4.24)	15.25 (3.34)	2.27 (2.04)
Bias Crimes < 5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 69)	7.85 (2.55)	7.51 (2.40)	8.78 (4.21)	7.43 (5.09)	13.44 (3.11)	4.00 (2.83)
Both Bias & Nonbias Crimes < 5 Years ( <i>n</i> = 11)	7.00 (3.30)	7.00 (2.45)	10.40 (3.98)	9.50 (5.15)	15.38 (2.88)	3.40 (2.41)

*Note.* Because of missing data, group sizes vary across measures. Standard deviations are shown in parentheses.